

A114

NIGHT LEAD POWERS WELCOME (400)
BIG STONE GAP, VA., MARCH 10 (AP)--WISE COUNTY'S "WELCOME HOME" CELEBRATION FOR U2 PILOT FRANCIS GARY POWERS GAINED THREE BANDS AND SEVEN MAYORS TODAY, BUT LOST ONE GOVERNOR.

VIRGINIA GOV. ALBERT IS HARRISON JR., A TOP-RANKING INVITED GUEST FOR THE MONDAY AFTERNOON EXERCISES HERE, ANNOUNCED RELUCTANTLY HE WON'T BE ABLE TO WORK THE TRIP INTO HIS BUSY SCHEDULE.

EVEN WITHOUT HIM, THOUGH, THE SPEAKING PROGRAM WILL BE FULL. ADDED TO THE GUEST LIST TODAY WERE MAYORS OF ALL THE COUNTY'S SEVEN TOWNS--BIG STONE GAP, APPALACHIA, NORTON, WISE, POUND, COEBURN AND ST. PAUL.

AT LEAST THREE BANDS--FROM APPALACHIA, BIG STONE GAP, AND NORTON HIGH SCHOOLS--WILL BE PRESENT.

THE CEREMONIES ARE A JOINT UNDERTAKING OF THE VARIOUS COMMUNITIES OF THIS HILL-COUNTRY COUNTY IN VIRGINIA'S FAR SOUTHWEST AND THERE HAS BEEN AN OBVIOUSLY PURPOSEFUL EFFORT TO KEEP THEM PITCHED ON A LOW KEY.

THERE WILL BE NO PARADE, THOUGH A COLOR GUARD WILL BE ON HAND IN THE ARMORY AND LOCAL-AREA ARMY AND AIR FORCE RESERVE CONTINGENTS WILL TURN OUT.

NOR IS A MOTORCADE PLANNED. POWERS, WHO'S EXPECTED TO COME HERE TOMORROW OR EARLY MONDAY, WILL STAY AT A SECRET SPOT AND WILL BE WHISKED TO THE ARMORY FOR THE PROGRAM IN HIS HONOR.

THE ARMORY WILL HOLD ONLY 1,500 PERSONS, BUT MANY MORE THAN THAT ARE EXPECTED TO CROWD INTO THIS LITTLE TOWN OF 4,700 TO GET A LOOK AT POWERS AND LET HIM KNOW THEY'RE GLAD TO HAVE HIM BACK. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENTS HAVE BEEN MADE FOR STATE POLICE, VOLUNTEER FIREMEN AND THE COUNTY RESCUE SQUAD TO HANDLE ANTICIPATED TRAFFIC JAMS.

JOE SMIDDY, DIRECTOR OF CLINCH VALLEY COLLEGE AT WISE, WILL BE MASTER OF CEREMONIES FOR THE PROGRAM WHICH PROBABLY WON'T LAST MORE THAN AN HOUR.

HARRISON PROBABLY WON'T BE THE ONLY POLITICAL BIGWIG UNABLE TO ATTEND. U.S. SEN. A. WILLIS ROBERTSON, D-VA., ALSO IS A LIKELY ABSENTEE, BUT REP. PAT JENNINGS, D-VA., OF THE SOUTHWEST 9TH DISTRICT ALREADY IS IN THE AREA AND ALMOST CERTAINLY WILL BE HERE.

U.S. SEN. HARRY F. BYRD, D-VA., ALSO HAS BEEN INVITED AND MAY COME. BYRD ANNOUNCED TODAY HE HAD WRITTEN POWERS' PARENTS, MR. AND MRS. OLIVER POWERS OF POUND, THAT HE WAS "VERY PROUD OF THE FINE SHOWING" THE U2 PILOT MADE BEFORE THE SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE.

"HE HAD A MOST DIFFICULT SITUATION BUT HE MET IT MANFULLY AND LIKE A TRUE AMERICAN," BYRD WROTE. HE ENDED BY EXPRESSING HOPE HE SOON COULD MEET THE ELDER POWERS AND "CONGRATULATE YOU ON THE RECORD OF YOUR SON."

PILOT POWERS HIMSELF IS EXPECTED TO SPEAK BRIEFLY AT THE CEREMONIES WHICH BIG STONE GAP MAYOR CARL MURPHY SIZED UP AS:

"SORT OF A HERO'S WELCOME, WITHOUT TOO MUCH TO-DO."

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